

Bellot Strait. No Ptarmigan were obtained in their summer plumage, as they had all left in April. A peculiarity worth noticing about these Ptarmigan is the relation between the length of the intestinal cæca and that of the intestine. Only one specimen of the Willow Grouse (*Tetrao saliceti*) was examined; in this the cæca were 27 inches long, gut 36 inches: in five specimens of Ptarmigan (*Tetrao lagopus*?) the proportion was 20 : 38, 19 : 43, 21 : 42, 22 : 45, $18\frac{1}{2}$: 39. I subjoin a minute description of these parts of our *Tetrao lagopus*. Two cæca arise at the side of the intestine, 5 inches from the anal orifice; they are connected to the gut by membrane for 2 inches. Hence (tracing only one cæcum), after these 2 inches it doubles upon itself for $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the two parts being closely connected, and then is joined to the intestine for $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch by a broad mesenteric membrane; it leaves the intestine again, doubling upon itself for 5 inches, and then, very closely tied to the gut, it runs along it for $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, ending in an abrupt point 2 inches long, unconnected to the gut. Length of cæcum, 20 inches; of gut, 38 inches. I may remark that Sir James Ross, in the Appendix to Parry's Third Voyage, states that he found, in the *Tetrao lagopus*, the cæca two-thirds of the length of the intestine; in the above case they were not one-half.

This paper is not introduced as containing any novelty, as the ornithology of the Arctic regions is now so well known; but only as an enumeration of the different species met with.

XX.—*On the Eggs of the Nutcracker and Parrot-billed Cross bill.* By the Rev. H. B. TRISTRAM, M.A., F.L.S.

I FELT inclined to communicate a few remarks, prior to the publication of the last Number of the 'Ibis,' on the Review of recent oological works which appeared in No. 4, but I have deferred doing so in the hope that Mr. J. Hancock, who had proposed to supply some notes on the breeding of *Loxia pityopsittacus*, *Totanus ochropus*, and *Fuligula cristata*, might by this time have fulfilled his intention.

All conscientious collectors must, I am sure, most heartily

agree with the writer of that review in the earnest tone with which he deprecates the too easy admission into cabinets of unauthenticated specimens. One or two careless admissions of spurious eggs deservedly destroy the reputation of a whole collection. Still, while disclaiming any desire to look upon "my own geese as swans," I must confess to having assigned a place in my cabinet to one species which the reviewer considers as awaiting the exertions of the Alpine Club to bring it to England for the first time—the Nutcracker. I am not aware that any other collector in this country pretends to its possession, and therefore a note of the eggs, and the manner in which I became possessed of them, may not be out of place in 'The Ibis.'

In the year 1844, which I spent in Switzerland and Savoy, while yet a very young ornithologist, I became acquainted with a shepherd and chasseur in the valley of Sixt, with whom I used to make excursions. I was then ignorant of the rarity of the Nutcracker's eggs, though I obtained two specimens of the bird, which I still possess. In the year 1854 I revisited the valley in the course of a walking tour, and hunted up my old friend, who rejoiced in the very common cognomen of Balmat. In conversation I asked him whether he ever collected any eggs; he said No, but afterwards told me he had taken a nest of the '*Casse-noix*' in the spring, and had the eggs at home. It appeared that, being in the pine-forest in the month of March (as far as he could recollect, the second or third week, before the snow was off the ground), he had discovered the nest of a Nutcracker on one of the lower branches of a pine, well sheltered by another branch closely covering it, and containing four eggs. The tree he described as growing very close to the side of a precipice, in descending which he had first descried it. The four eggs were strung up in his kitchen. As he had never taken a Nutcracker's nest before, he would part with only three of them, on which, however, he set no very great value, as he asked but five francs for the lot. One of these I unfortunately smashed a few days afterwards, the other two I still possess. They measure 1·27 inch in length, ·9 inch in breadth, and are of a dun colour, without the greenish hue of the Magpie's, and are thickly covered at the larger end with large brown blotches, which become very sparse

towards the middle of the egg. I certainly never saw any variety of the eggs of the Common Magpie which would pass for them; and when I take into consideration that the Nutcracker is a common bird in the pine-forests of Sixt, for I have never spent a day there without seeing it several times—that it also *does breed* there, for I have seen the young birds scarcely able to fly among the trees—that Balmat was perfectly familiar with the Nutcracker, and had no temptation to deceive, since he was evidently ignorant of the rarity of the egg, as may be gathered from the price he asked—that neither the Magpie nor the Jay is found, so far as I am aware, in those forests—and that my specimens exactly coincide with authentic German eggs,—I do not think that I am justly amenable to the criticism of your reviewer if I claim authenticity for these specimens. The evidence does certainly appear to me the next best to that of actual capture by oneself. Human testimony is fallible; but if admissible at all, as Mr. Wolley admitted it in the case of the Smew, I think it may pass here.

As to *Loxia pityopsittacus*, Mr. Wainwright has sent home from the southern forests of Sweden the nests and eggs of several pairs of Parrot Crossbills, with the head of the hen-bird attached to each. One of these nests, through Mr. Hancock's kindness, is now in my possession. The nest does not differ, except in size, from that of the Common Crossbill; but the eggs, while similarly marked, are invariably larger. Mr. Hancock in 1858 received a nest which, from the size of the eggs, he suspected must belong to this bird, and consequently sent directions to have the birds snared in the nests, and forwarded to him, carefully attached. Both species appear to breed at the same early period, and the four nests of the Parrot Crossbill thus identified arrived along with a greater number of those of the common bird.

Mr. Wainwright has also corroborated Herr Bädcker's account of the Green Sandpiper's sometimes breeding in old Fieldfares' nests in trees, as he has forwarded eggs, now in my possession, taken by him in trees, which exactly correspond with those taken by myself near Bodoë in 1852 in hillocks of grass, and figured by Mr. Hewitson in his last edition. Mr. Wainwright does not

appear to have found it breeding at all on the ground. Probably its habits in this respect are determined by the locality.

While on the subject of the Review in No. 4, I may remark that I cannot condemn Herr Bädeler for inaccuracy in extending the range of the Common Kingfisher to Africa. I have repeatedly seen and shot it in Northern Africa, and, unless I am strangely mistaken, have also watched it in the Island of Rhodes.

XXI.—*Note on the Eggs of the Eared Vulture and the Wedge-tailed Eagle.* By JOHN HENRY GURNEY, M.P., F.Z.S.

A SPECIMEN of the Eared Vulture (*Vultur auricularis*, Daudin), formerly in the Surrey Zoological Gardens, and now in my possession, laid an egg on the 15th February, 1859, which is correctly figured in Dr. Bree's work on European Birds, from a drawing made by Mr. Reeve of the Norwich Museum. On the 23rd February in the present year, the same bird laid a second egg, differing from the first only in being slightly more elongated, and in the rufous colouring on the obtuse end of the egg being considerably more intense. In the bird which laid these eggs, the fleshy folds on the side of the neck (from which this Vulture derives its specific name) are amply developed, proving that these appendages are not limited to the male sex.

I have also in my possession a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles of Australia (*Aquila audax*, Lath.), which were formerly in the menagerie at Knowsley. The female of these laid an egg on the 28th February of the present year. The distribution of the rufous spots on this egg presented an intermediate appearance between the two specimens figured in the Zoological Society's Proceedings for 1850 (Aves, pl. 19. p. 91). As the female bird appeared desirous of incubating the egg, she was allowed to retain possession of it till the third day, when it was found to have been broken,—but how, I am unable to say.
